

APPENDIX A

SR 520 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

PROJECT HISTORY

A BRIEF PROJECT HISTORY

SR 520 links some of Puget Sound's most densely populated cities – Seattle, Bellevue, Kirkland, and Redmond – and some of the largest employers in the state. The key segment in SR 520 is the Evergreen Point Floating Bridge, a 42-year old structure that is nearing the end of its life. The floating bridge carried 115,000 vehicles a day between these cities in 2005. As these cities continue to grow the number of people that depend on SR 520 to cross Lake Washington will also increase. Congestion is typical in both directions during the morning and evening rush hours.

The one-and-a-half-mile long Evergreen Point Bridge is very vulnerable to windstorms and earthquakes and needs to be replaced. Spanning Lake Washington, the bridge has suffered through dozens of winter storms, several earthquakes, and various traffic and boating accidents. Since its construction in the early 60s, these stress factors have taken their toll – the bridge and its approach structures have aged, are becoming susceptible to earthquakes and storms, and need to be replaced. Retrofit improvements have kept it safe and functional, but they won't last forever.

In 2000, the remaining useful life of the floating portion of the Evergreen Point Bridge was estimated to be 20 years, assuming no major storms or earthquakes hit the region. The risk of failure in earthquakes or storms increases every year. Therefore, the facility must be replaced before 2020.



Project Description

The current bridge consists of four travel lanes, a median barrier, and narrow shoulders. The posted speed is 50 mph. The bridge could be replaced with a 4-Lane or 6-Lane facility. Both alternatives would create a seismically sound and safe new Portage Bay Bridge and Evergreen Point Floating Bridge with full shoulders, and a bike and pedestrian path through the entire project corridor. Both alternatives include pontoons large enough to support future high capacity transit (HCT). Expansion and improvements to the approach structures on the Evergreen Point Bridge, the Portage Bay Bridge, on- and off-ramps and segments of SR 520 on either end of the lake are also included in both alternatives.

In developing the alternatives, some of the important components that are being evaluated include cost, feasibility of construction, maintenance, safety (for all travel modes, and considerations for emergency situations), mobility, and future needs/expectations (e.g., high capacity transit). Community acceptance is also a high priority. Specific considerations include:

Safety - Rebuild Portage Bay and Evergreen Point bridges, reducing seismic and storm damage risks. Improve safety and reliability by providing full shoulders for disabled vehicles and emergency aid.

Congestion Relief - Provide a dedicated HOV lane to move transit and carpools (in the 6-Lane Alternative) and provide full shoulders for disabled vehicles and emergency aid. Pontoons will be built to carry future high capacity transit.

Both the 4-Lane and 6-Lane alternatives propose a substantially wider bridge than exists today. The 4-Lane Alternative, which replaces the current number of lanes, would be wider because it includes full shoulders and a new bicycle/pedestrian path. As a result, more land will be needed for the highway and the highway will be closer to adjacent communities. Strategies for mitigation of the effects upon the environment and communities are being developed and evaluated.

Context-Sensitive Factors

This project is being developed in partnership with Sound Transit and the Federal Highway Administration. All three agencies are involved in the project's policy- and decision-making. State funds drive nearly 100% of the project's current work. Tolls are assumed to provide some of the project's future funding.

Public input to the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project has been and will continue to be an essential element of the project. Public involvement provides information on the project's progress and strives to engage all community members including residents, businesses, organizations, and jurisdiction leaders. To date, project outreach has included project area tours, public meetings and open houses, jurisdictional, community and organizational briefings, committee meetings, community workshops, and neighborhood roundtables.

The Project Team has conducted extensive public involvement efforts, even at the earliest stages of project development. Local stakeholders represented at workshops held in 2005-2006 include: University of Washington, Washington Park Arboretum, City of Seattle Departments of Transportation and Parks and Recreation, and local neighborhoods along the corridor on both sides of Lake Washington. Community outreach has been an important part of the project, and will continue throughout the life of the project.

The SR 520 Project Team sees the Corridor Aesthetics work with the Design Advisory Group (DAG) as an important step in establishing some aesthetic guidelines that will be used by the rest of the Design Team as the project moves forward. The Design Team will include bridge designers, architects, landscape architects, lighting designers, and other specialists who will be preparing the final design packages for the project. It is important that the DAG and Project Team provide the overall aesthetic direction for these specialists to consider and try to incorporate as they move in to more refined design.



